

AUDITING FOR RESULTS

KING COUNTY AUDITOR'S OFFICE

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JAIL HEALTH SERVICES' PHARMACY OPERATIONS AND MEDICATION ADMINISTRATION PERFORMANCE AUDIT

This performance audit evaluated Jail Health Services' pharmacy operations and medication administration, including an assessment by an independent consultant of the quality, accuracy, and efficiency of practices.

Overall, we found that Jail Health Services' patients are at no greater risk of medication-related errors than patients in other healthcare settings. However, opportunities exist for Jail Health Services to increase accountability in its medication processes.

Improvements to staffing models for pharmacy and nursing shifts were recommended to ensure that staffing levels match workload demands and that Jail Health Services is using the most cost-effective mix of full-time staff, temporary staff, and overtime.

We also recommended that Jail Health Services identify key publicly reportable performance measures, including outcome-based measures, and monitor these through joint reviews by Jail Health Services and the Department of Adult and Juvenile Detention.

Implementation of the reports' recommendations will improve accountability, efficiency, and accuracy of medication dispensing and administration processes.

CAPITAL PROJECTS OVERSIGHT

In 2007, the council funded a Capital Projects Oversight Pilot Program within the auditor's office. The purpose was to improve the adequacy and timing of capital project information and capital project budgeting process overall.

The pilot monitored four projects, two of which are the Brightwater Wastewater Treatment Plant and the Harborview Ninth and Jefferson Building.

A September 19th quarterly report to the Capital Budget Committee on the Brightwater project concluded that the Wastewater Treatment Division (WTD) has made significant progress in implementing the recommendations from the previous oversight report and is developing tools to better manage and track project schedules and cost. R.W. Beck, the council's oversight consultant for the Brightwater project, also concluded that current project costs are trending higher than WTD's 2007 total project cost estimate of \$1.76 billion. Beck's estimate is \$1.83 to \$1.86 billion. The report stated that the Brightwater project is currently on schedule.

The Ninth and Jefferson Building project is a 14-story \$184-million building that will provide additional parking, office, clinic, and laboratory space for Harborview Medical Center. The project was originally part of the Harborview bond projects managed by the University of Washington. However, due to cost overruns, in November 2006, the council approved a change in the project scope and delivery method and included the project in the auditor's Capital Project Oversight Program.

In June 2007, the auditor's office retained the national real estate development firm Jones Lang LaSalle (JLL), to provide that oversight. JLL has provided four monthly oversight reports to the council. JLL monitors project issues as they arise and reports that the project is progressing on schedule and within budget.

About the Auditor's Office:

The King County Auditor's Office is an independent agency within the legislative branch. The office was established in 1969 under Section 250 of the County Charter. Its mission is to conduct independent audits and studies to improve county government.

The County Auditor develops an annual work program, which is adopted by the County Council. Outcomes considered in selecting audit projects include the potential for:

- Significant cost impact.
- Improvement in public policies and operational practices.
- Increased efficiency, effectiveness, and performance of public services.
- Enhanced accountability systems and transparency of county operations.

Two other projects are also on the list of projects for continued oversight by our office:

- Accountable Business Transformation
- Integrated Security Project at the King County Correctional Facility

The auditor's office has been monitoring and periodically reporting on these projects for the past two years using in-house staff.

To assist in the development of a legislative oversight model for capital projects based on industry best practices, the auditor's office contracted with PMA Consultants and Saybrook Associates. The consultants conducted research on best practices and county policies, procedures, and projects; and they presented their findings to the Capital Budget Committee in early September.

The major elements of their recommended model include:

- Creation of a dedicated Office of Capital Project Oversight within the auditor's office.
- The use of a ranking tool to identify high-risk projects for oversight.
- Phased conditional funding of major capital projects.
- The use of common standards for cost estimating, budgeting, and reporting of the status of capital projects.

With the completion of the initial phases of the Capital Projects Oversight Program, the auditor's office is now working with the council to develop a plan and budget request for implementing the recommendations.

COUNTYWIDE PERFORMANCE MEASUREMENT WORK GROUP

In August, the Performance Measurement Work Group, facilitated by the auditor's office, completed another milestone in its work plan by making recommendations to the County Council. Their recommendations seek to promote the development of countywide strategic planning, performance management and measurement, and reporting to the public.

The work group, whose participants come from departments and agencies in all three branches of county government, recommended additions to county code to require the following actions:

- Agencies and departments should continue ongoing efforts to develop and improve planning, performance measurement, and reporting.

- All agencies and departments will submit annual business plans as part of the budget process.
- All agencies and departments will develop a strategic plan every three years.
- The county should publish an annual countywide performance report to the public.
- The county should implement a countywide citizen engagement process.
- The county should prepare a countywide strategic plan every three to five years.

Councilmembers praised the progress of the work group and requested an ordinance be drafted to include the recommendations above.

CITIZEN COUNCILOR NETWORK

The King County Council recently created the Citizen Councilor Network program through adoption of Ordinance #15896. The purpose of the program is to enhance citizen participation, civic engagement, and citizen education in government.

The ordinance adopted the text of Initiative 24, which received sufficient voter signatures to place it on the general election ballot. The council chose to adopt the initiative through an ordinance rather than placing it on the fall ballot.

The program creates a countywide network of volunteers who will coordinate small group discussions among interested citizens about topics of public interest. These topics will be selected by the Auditor's Office in collaboration with a steering committee and program volunteers. Citizen opinions will be collected and shared with the county council and other interested public officials. The program is intended to be self-funded through voluntary contributions from participants, businesses, organizations, and foundations.

While this new program will be supervised by the King County Auditor's Office, the program will be administered by a volunteer Citizen Councilor Coordinator and two volunteer Deputy Citizen Councilor Coordinators.

What's Ahead

For completion this year:

- Facilities Management Division – Capital Planning and Budgeting Performance Audit
- Follow-up: Jail Overtime Audit
- Environmental Health Services Fees and Overhead Financial Audit